USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service

Ecological site R058BY162WY
Shallow Loamy (SwLy) 10-14” PZ

Accessed: 07/09/2020

General information

Provisional. A provisional ecological site description has undergone quality control and quality assurance review. It contains a working state and transition model and enough information to identify the ecological site.

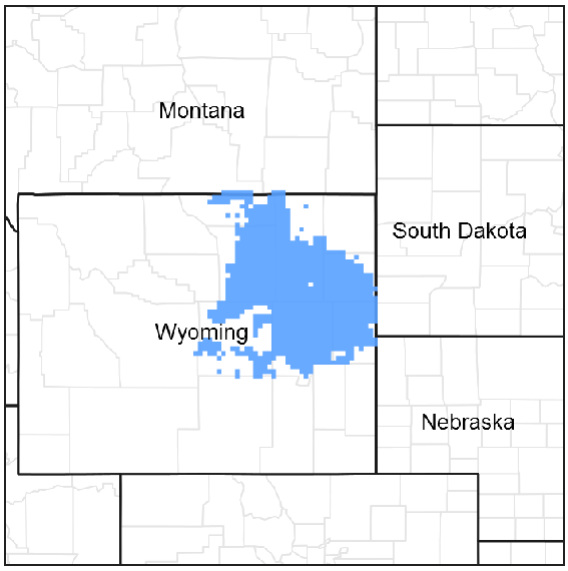

Figure 1. Mapped extent

Areas shown in blue indicate the maximum mapped extent of this ecological site. Other ecological sites likely occur within the highlighted areas. It is also possible for this ecological site to occur outside of highlighted areas if detailed soil survey has not been completed or recently updated.

MLRA notes

Major Land Resource Area (MLRA): 058B–Northern Rolling High Plains, Southern Part

MLRA 58B–Northern Rolling High Plains, Southern Part is located in northeastern Wyoming (95 percent) and extreme southeastern Montana (5 percent). It is comprised of sedimentary plains, scoria hills, and river valleys. The major rivers are the Powder, Tongue, Belle Fourche, Cheyenne, and North Platte. Other tributaries include the Little Powder River, Little Missouri River, Clear and Crazy Woman Creeks, and others. This MLRA is traversed by Interstates 25 and 90, and by U.S. Highways 14 and 16. The extent of MLRA 58B covers approximately 12.3 million acres. Major land uses include rangeland (approximately 93 percent), and cropland, pasture and hayland (approximately 2 percent), while forest, urban, and miscellaneous land occupy the remainder (approximately 5 percent). Cities include Buffalo, Casper, Sheridan, and Gillette, WY. Land ownership is mostly private. Federal lands include Thunder Basin National Grassland (U.S. Forest Service) and Bureau of Land Management properties. Areas of interest in MLRA 58B in Wyoming include Fort Phil Kearny State Historic Site, Glendo State Park, and Lake DeSmet.

The elevations in MLRA 58B increase gradually from north to south and range from approximately 2,900 to 5,900 feet. A few buttes are higher than 6,800 feet. The average annual precipitation in this area ranges from 10-17 inches per year. Precipitation occurs mostly during the growing season, often during rapidly developing thunderstorms. Mean

annual air temperature is 46°F. Summer temperatures may exceed 100°F. Winter temperatures may drop to subzero, and snowfall averages 45 inches per year, but varies from 25 to over 70 inches in some locales.

Classification relationships

USDA Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS):
Land Resource Region–G Western Great Plains Range and Irrigation; Major Land Resource Area (MLRA)–58B Northern Rolling High Plains, Southern Part (USDA, 2006)

Relationship to Other Classifications:

USDA Forest Service (FS) Classification Hierarchy:

Province–331 Great Plains-Palouse Dry Steppe; Section–331G-Powder River Basin; Subsections–331Gb Montana Shale Plains, 331Ge Powder River Basin, 331Gf South Powder River Basin-Scoria Hills (Cleland et al, 1997)

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Classification Hierarchy:

Level III Ecoregion–43 Northwestern Great Plains; Level IV Ecoregion–43p Scoria Hills, 43q Mesic-Dissected Plains, 43w Powder River Basin (EPA, 2013)
https://www.epa.gov/eco-research/ecoregions

REVISION NOTES:

The Shallow Loamy 10-14” PZ site was developed by an earlier version of the Shallow Loamy (SwLy) 10-14” Precipitation Zone ESD (2001, updated 2005) The earlier versions of the Shallow Loamy ESD was based upon input from NRCS (formerly Soil Conservation Service) and historical information obtained from the Shallow Loamy 10-14 Northern Plains (NP) Range Site Description (1988). This ESD meets the Provisional requirements of the National Ecological Site Handbook (NESH). This ESD will continue refinement towards an Approved status according to the NESH.

Ecological site concept

The Shallow Loamy 10-14" PZ occurs on nearly level to steeply sloping hills and ridges, on sedimentary plains or uplands. Primary production is from cool-season midgrasses (bunch and rhizomatous), warm-season midgrasses (bunch), and secondary warm-season shortgrasses. There is also lesser component of forbs and shrubs.

Associated sites

R058BY158WY	**Shallow Clayey (SwCy) 10-14” PZ** Shallow Clayey 10-14
R058BY122WY	**Loamy (Ly) 10-14” PZ** Loamy 10-14

Similar sites

R058BY262WY	**Shallow Loamy (SwLy) 15-17” PZ** Shallow Loamy 15-17” P.Z. has higher production.

Table 1. Dominant plant species

Tree	Not specified
Shrub	Not specified

Herbaceous	(1) *Pascopyrum smithii* (2) *Pseudoroegneria spicata*

Physiographic features

This site occurs on nearly level to steeply sloping hills and ridges, on sedimentary plains or uplands.

Table 2. Representative physiographic features

Landforms	(1) Hill (2) Ridge
Runoff class	Low to high
Flooding frequency	None
Ponding frequency	None
Elevation	3,500–6,800 ft
Slope	0–60%
Water table depth	80 in
Aspect	Aspect is not a significant factor

Climatic features

The average annual precipitation ranges from 10 to 17 inches per year across MLRA 58B. There are two Precipitation Zones (PZs). The 10-14” PZ is predominant across the MLRA in Wyoming, including portions of Sheridan, Johnson, and Natrona Counties; portions of Campbell and Converse Counties; and smaller portions of Weston and Niobrara Counties. The 15-17” PZ occurs in northern and eastern portions of the MLRA, including portions of Sheridan, Campbell, and western Crook Counties, Wyoming. Wide fluctuations in precipitation may occur from year to year, and occasional periods of extended drought (longer than one year in duration) can be expected. Two-thirds of the annual precipitation occurs during the growing season from May through September. Mean Annual Air Temperature (MAAT) is 46°F. Cold air outbreaks from Canada in winter move rapidly from northwest to southeast and account for extreme minimum temperatures. Chinook winds may also occur in winter and bring rapid rises in temperature. Extreme storms may occur during the winter, but most severely affect ranch operations during late winter and spring. High-intensity afternoon thunderstorms may arise in summer. Annual wind speed averages about 5 mph, ranging from 6 mph during the winter and spring. Daytime winds generally are stronger than nighttime and occasional strong storms may bring brief periods of high winds with gusts to more than 75 mph. The average length of the freeze-free period (28°F) is 125 days from May 16 to September 19. The average frost-free period (32°F) is 101 days from June 1 to September 9, area-wide.

Growth of native cool-season plants begins in late April to early May with peak growth in mid- to late June. Native warm-season plants begin growth in late May to early June and continue into August. Regrowth of cool-season plants occurs in September in most years, depending upon moisture.

Note: The climate described here is based on historic climate station data and is averaged to provide an overview of annual precipitation, temperatures, and growing season. Future climate is beyond the scope of this document. However, research to determine the effects of elevated CO2 and/or heating on mixed-grass prairie ecosystems, and how it may relate to future plant communities, is ongoing.

For detailed information, or to find a specific climate station, visit the Western Regional Climate Center (WRCC) website:
https://wrcc.dri.edu/summary/Climsmwy.html

Wind speed averages can be found at the WRCC home page, under the Specialty Climate tab: https://wrcc.dri.edu/

The following tables represent the 10-14 Inches PZ:

Table 3. Representative climatic features

Frost-free period (characteristic range)	92-103 days
Freeze-free period (characteristic range)	121-128 days
Precipitation total (characteristic range)	12-13 in
Frost-free period (actual range)	86-107 days
Freeze-free period (actual range)	116-129 days
Precipitation total (actual range)	11-14 in
Frost-free period (average)	98 days
Freeze-free period (average)	124 days
Precipitation total (average)	13 in

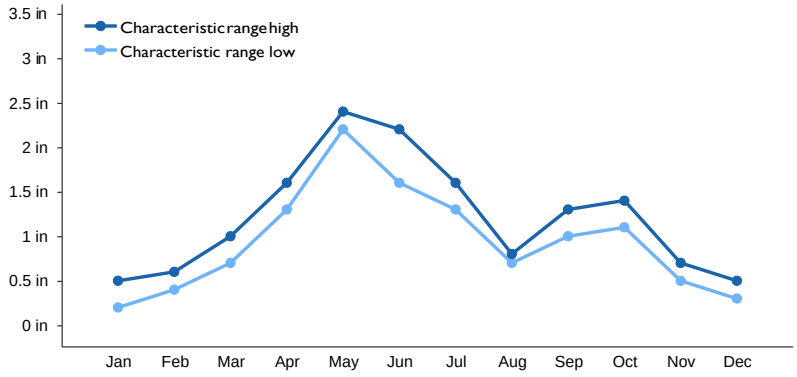

Figure 2. Monthly precipitation range

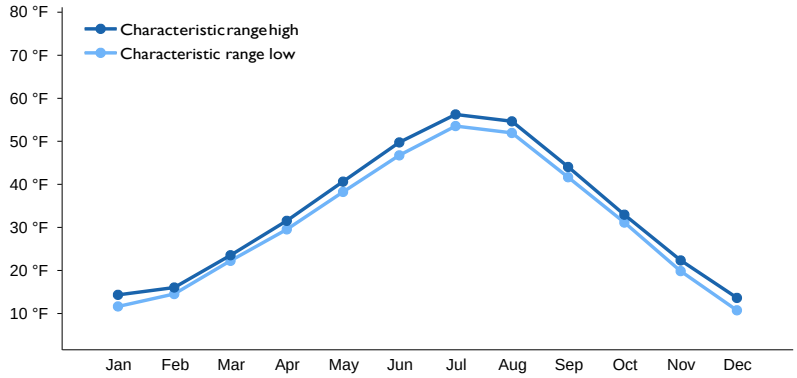

Figure 3. Monthly minimum temperature range

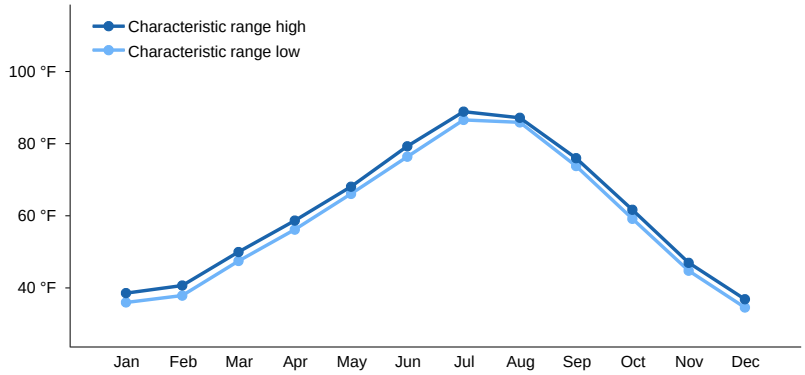

Figure 4. Monthly maximum temperature range

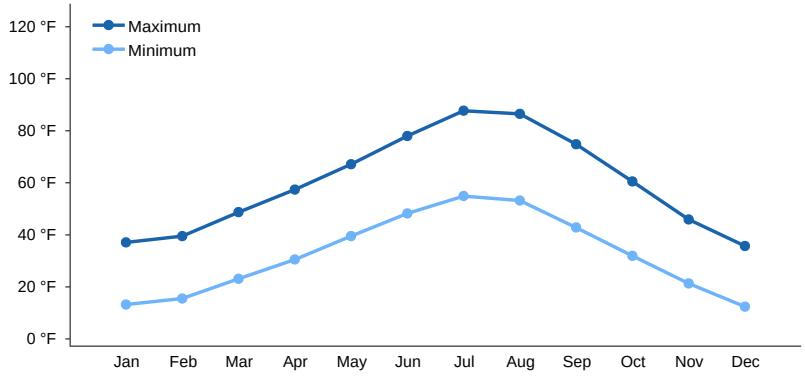

Figure 5. Monthly average minimum and maximum temperature

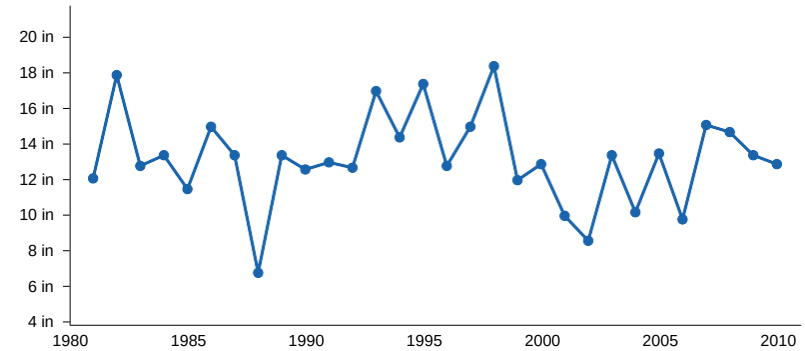

Figure 6. Annual precipitation pattern

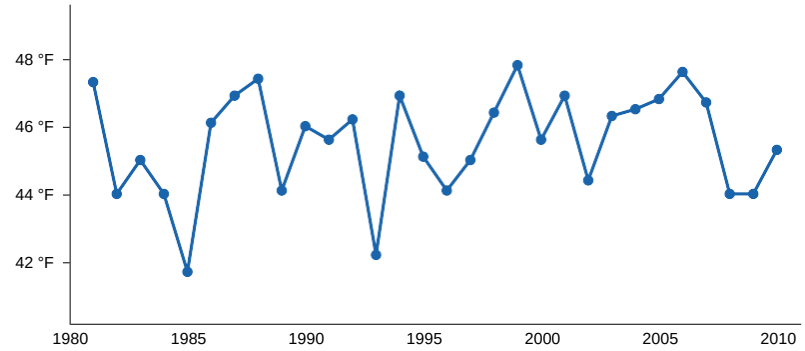

Figure 7. Annual average temperature pattern

Climate stations used

- (1) SHERIDAN CO AP [USW00024029], Sheridan, WY
- (2) CASPER NATRONA CO AP [USW00024089], Casper, WY
- (3) DULL CTR 1SE [USC00482725], Douglas, WY
- (4) KAYCEE [USC00485055], Kaycee, WY
- (5) MIDWEST [USC00486195], Midwest, WY
- (6) WESTON 1 E [USC00489580], Weston, WY
- (7) BUFFALO [USC00481165], Buffalo, WY
- (8) WRIGHT 12W [USC00489805], Gillette, WY
- (9) GLENROCK 5 ESE [USC00483950], Glenrock, WY

Influencing water features

There are no water features of the ecological site or adjacent wetland/riparian regimes that influence the vegetation or management of the Shallow Loamy 10-14” PZ ecological site.

Soil features

The soils on this site are well drained, shallow to bedrock and formed in residuum and slope alluvium weathered from sedimentary rock. They typically have a moderate to moderately rapid permeability class. The available water capacity is typically very low to low. Available water is the portion of water in a soil that can be readily absorbed by plant roots. This is the amount of water released between the field capacity and the permanent wilting point. As fineness of texture increases, there is a general increase in available moisture storage from sands to loams and silt loams. The soil moisture regime is typically ustic aridic. The soil temperature regime is mesic.

The surface layer of the soils in this site are typically clay loam or loam but may include silt loam or very fine sandy loam. The surface layer ranges from a depth of 1 to 6 inches thick. The subsoil is typically clay loam or loam. Soils in this site typically have carbonates at the surface; but some soils may be leached as deep as 2 to 10 inches. Soils formed in material derived from porcelanite (scoria) are inconsistently calcareous. These soils are susceptible to erosion by water and wind. The potential for water erosion accelerates with increasing slope.

Surface soil structure is fine to coarse granular or fine subangular blocky, and structure below the surface is prismatic and/or subangular blocky. Soil structure describes the way in which soil particles are aggregated and defines the nature of the system of pores and channels in a soil. Together, soil texture and structure help determine the ability of the soil to hold and conduct the water and air necessary for sustaining life.

Major soil series correlated to this ecological site include: Shingle and Worf.

The attributes listed below represent 0-40 inches in depth or to the first restrictive layer.

Note: Revisions to soil surveys are on-going. For the most recent updates, visit the Web Soil Survey, the official site for soils information: http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx

Table 4. Representative soil features

Parent material	(1) Residuum–sedimentary rock (2) Slope alluvium–sedimentaryrock (3) Colluvium
Surface texture	(1) Clay loam (2) Loam (3) Silt loam (4) Very fine sandy loam
Drainage class	Well drained
Permeability class	Moderate to moderately rapid

Soil depth	10–20 in
Surface fragment cover <=3"	0–10%
Surface fragment cover >3"	0–20%
Available water capacity (Depth not specified)	1.6–5.6 in
Calcium carbonate equivalent (Depth not specified)	0–10%
Electrical conductivity (Depth not specified)	0–4 mmhos/cm
Sodium adsorption ratio (Depth not specified)	0–5
Soil reaction (1:1 water) (Depth not specified)	6.6–8.4
Subsurface fragment volume <=3" (Depth not specified)	0–40%
Subsurface fragment volume >3" (Depth not specified)	0–30%

Ecological dynamics

The information in this ESD, including the state-and-transition model diagram (STM), was developed using archeological and historical data, professional experience, and scientific studies. The information is representative of a dynamic set of plant communities that represent the complex interaction of several ecological processes. The plant composition has been determined by study of rangeland relic areas, areas protected from excessive disturbance, seasonal use pastures, short duration, time-controlled grazing strategies, and historical accounts.

The Shallow Loamy 10-14” PZ ecological site is characterized by three states: Reference, Sod-Bound, and Eroded. The Reference State is characterized by cool-season rhizomatous midgrasses (western wheatgrass, thickspike wheatgrass), cool-season bunch midgrasses (bluebunch wheatgrass, needle and thread) warm-season bunch midgrass (little bluestem), and warm-season shortgrass (blue grama). Other grasses and grass-likes include prairie Junegrass, Cusick’s bluegrass, Sandberg bluegrass, and threadleaf sedge, also hairy- and sideoats grama, Fendler threeawn, plains muhly, and threadleaf sedge. Forbs (dotted blazing star, scarlet globemallow, buckwheat species, and phlox), and shrubs (skunkbush sumac and Wyoming big sagebrush) are also present. Trees such as Rocky Mountain juniper occasionally occur in minor amounts. The Sod-bound State is characterized by warm-season shortgrass (blue grama) and grass-likes (threadleaf sedge). The Eroded State is characterized by annual grasses (sixweeks fescue), Fendler threeawn, forbs (curlycup gumweed, hairy false goldenaster, and annuals), shrubs (prairie sagewort, snakeweed, yucca, and pricklypear) and bare ground. Invasives include cool-season annual bromes such as field brome (also known as Japanese brome), and cheatgrass. The degree of grazing has a significant impact on the ecological dynamics of the site. This region was historically occupied by large grazing animals such as bison and elk, along with pronghorn and mule deer. Grazing by these large herbivores, along with climatic fluctuations, had a major influence on the ecological dynamics of this site. Deer and pronghorn are widely distributed throughout the MLRA. Secondary influences of herbivory by species such as small rodents, insects, and root-feeding organisms has impacted the vegetation and continues today.

Recurrent drought has historically impacted the vegetation of this region. Changes in species composition and production will vary depending upon the duration and severity of the drought cycle and on prior grazing management.

As this site begins to shift from a combination of excessive grazing, or frequent and severe defoliation during the growing season, bunchgrasses such as needle and thread will decrease in both frequency and production. Grasses and grass-likes such as blue grama, threadleaf sedge, and sixweeks fescue will increase. Forbs and shrubs such as hairy false goldenaster, tansyaster, broom snakeweed, and prairie sagewort (also known as fringed sagewort), will also increase. If continued, the plant community will become sod-bound, and all midgrasses can eventually be removed from the plant community. Over the long-term, this continuous use in combination with high stocking rates, will result in bare ground developing and shrubs such as pricklypear, broom snakeweed; and annual forbs such as wooly plantain, field cottonrose, and pepperweed increasing or invading. Other invasives include field brome (also known as Japanese brome) and cheatgrass.

The following diagram illustrates the common plant communities that can occur on the site and the community pathways (CP) among plant communities. Plant Communities are identified by 1.1, 1.2, etc. and are described in the narrative. Bold lines surrounding each state represent ecological thresholds. Transitions (T) indicate the transition across an ecological threshold to another state. Once a threshold has been crossed into another state, it may not be feasible to return to the original state, even with significant management inputs and practices. The ecological processes plant communities, community pathways, transition and/or restoration pathways will be discussed in more detail in the plant community descriptions following the diagram.

State and transition model

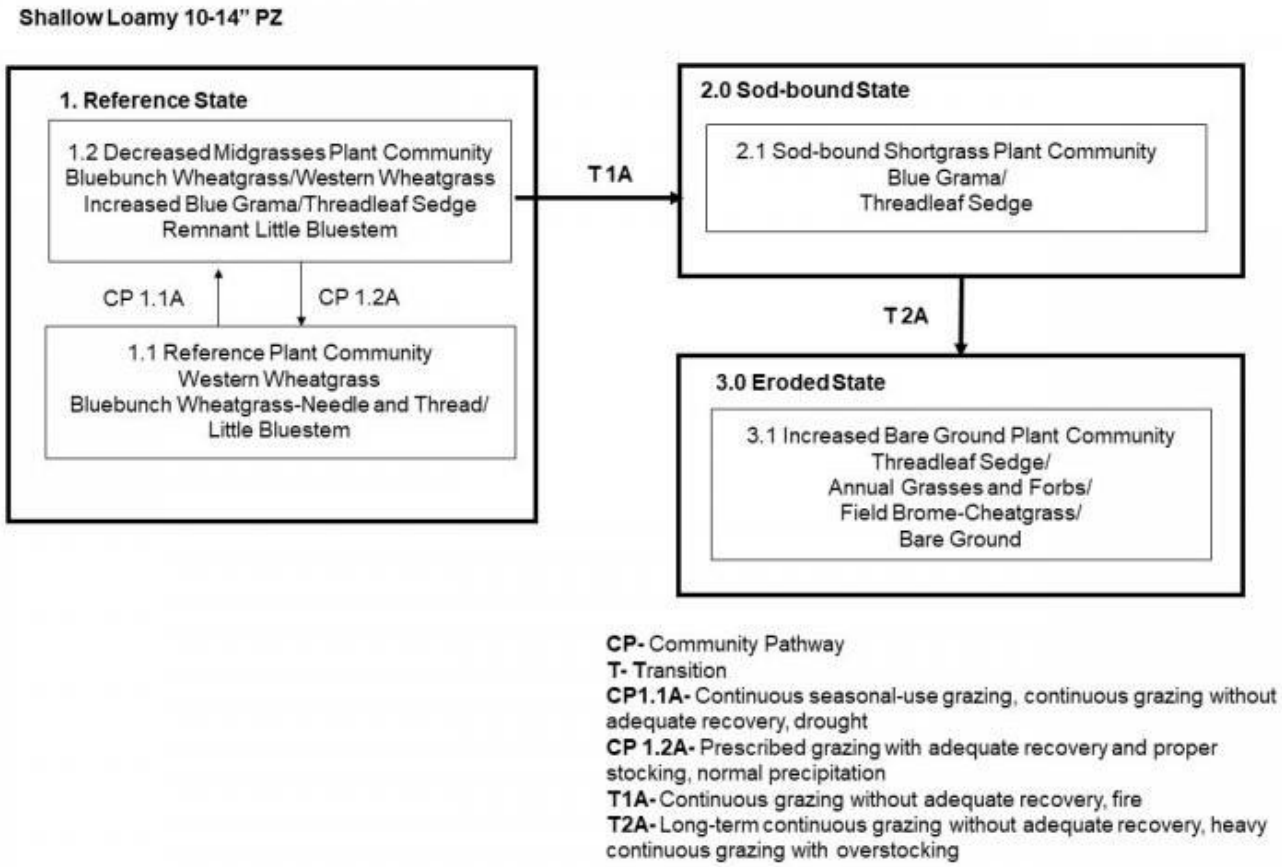

Figure 8.

State 1
Reference State

The Reference State is characterized by two distinct plant community phases: Reference and Decreased Midgrasses Plant Community. The plant communities, and various successional stages between them, represent the natural range of variability within the Reference State.

Community 1.1
Reference Plant Community– Western Wheatgrass, Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Little Bluestem

This is the interpretive plant community for this site. It is well adapted to the Northern Great Plains climate. This community developed with grazing by large herbivores and is suited to grazing by domestic livestock. Historically, fires likely were patchy and randomly distributed. This plant community can be found on areas where grazed plants receive adequate periods of recovery during the growing season. The potential vegetation is about 75 percent grasses and grass-likes, 15 percent forbs, and 10 percent woody plants.

The plant community is predominately cool-season midgrasses, with a smaller component of warm-season mid- and shortgrasses. The major grasses and grass-likes include western- and thickspike wheatgrass, bluebunch wheatgrass, and needle and thread. Secondary and minor grasses and grass-likes include little bluestem, prairie Junegrass, threadleaf sedge, Cusick's bluegrass, green needlegrass, sideoats grama, and blue- and hairy grama, Fendler's

threeawn, and plains muhly. A variety of forbs include American vetch, white- and purple prairieclover, breadroot scurfpea, and prairie coneflower. Other forbs include dotted blazing star (also known as dotted gayfeather), scarlet globemallow, sulphur-flower buckwheat, and spiny phlox. Primary subshrubs and shrubs are prairie sagewort (also known as fringed sagebrush), winterfat, big sagebrush, rubber rabbitbrush, and skunkbush sumac. (see the Species Composition List for additional information.) Plant diversity is high.

In the 10 to 14” Precipitation Zone (PZ), the total annual production (air-dry weight) is about 900 pounds per acre during an average year, but it can range from about 450 pounds per acre in unfavorable years to about 1,200 pounds per acre in above-average years. Defoliation levels should be determined as part of a grazing management plan based on objectives.

Nutrient and water cycles, and energy flow are functioning properly. Infiltration rates are moderate, and soil erosion is low. Litter is properly distributed where vegetative cover is continuous. Plant decadence and natural mortality are low. This community is resistant to many disturbances except excessive grazing, or development into urban or other uses.

Table 5. Annual production by plant type

Plant Type	Low (Lb/Acre)	Representative Value (Lb/Acre)	High (Lb/Acre)
Grass/Grasslike	325	697	920
Forb	85	113	140
Shrub/Vine	40	90	140
Total	**450**	**900**	**1200**

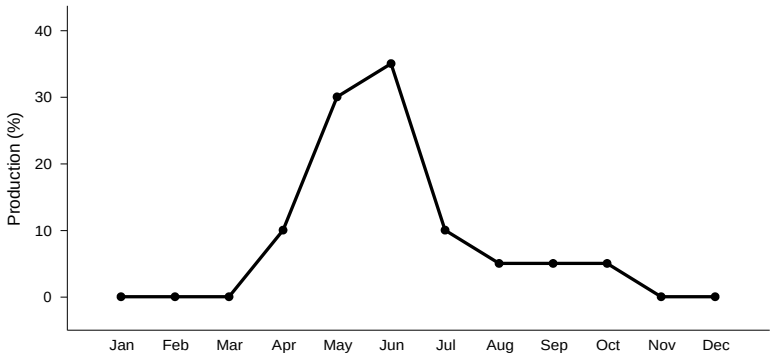

Figure 10. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). WY1401, 10-14NP upland sites.

Community 1.2
Decreased Midgrasses Plant Community– Bluebunch Wheatgrass, Western Wheatgrass, Increased Blue Grama and Threadleaf Sedge, Remnant Little Bluestem

This plant community developed with excessive grazing without adequate recovery during the growing season. Grazing-tolerant species such as blue grama and threadleaf sedge have noticeably increased. Midgrasses such as needle and thread may initially increase or decrease depending on the season of grazing use. Palatable forbs such as white and purple prairieclover, American vetch, and penstemon are present in reduced amounts. Hairy false goldenaster, slimflower scurfpea, scarlet globemallow, prairie sagewort (fringed sagewort), and broom snakeweed have increased. Natural disturbances such as drought and/or fire can contribute to this shift.

In the 10 to 14“ PZ, the total annual production (air-dry weight) is about 700 pounds per acre during an average year, but it can range from about 450 pounds per acre in unfavorable years to about 1,000 pounds per acre in above-average years.

Total aboveground biomass has been reduced. Reduction of rhizomatous wheatgrasses, nitrogen-fixing forbs, and increased warm-season shortgrasses have begun to alter the biotic integrity of this community. Water and nutrient

cycles may be impaired.

Nearly all plant species typically found in the Reference Plant Community are present and will respond to changes in grazing management.

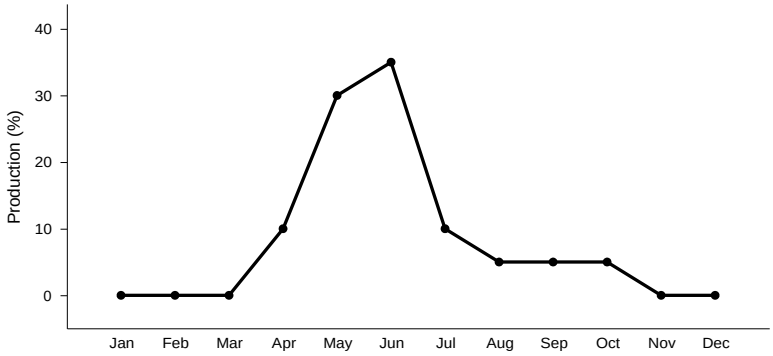

Figure 11. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). WY1401, 10-14NP upland sites.

Pathway 1.1A
Community 1.1 to 1.2

Excessive grazing without adequate recovery between grazing events, drought, or fire can shift this plant community toward the Decreased Midgrasses Plant Community. Over a period of years, plant species less tolerant to frequent and severe defoliation will begin to decrease, and those more tolerant will begin to increase. Excessive grazing from year-to-year will result in a reduction or loss of cool-season species. Biotic integrity and water and nutrient cycles may become impaired because of this community pathway.

Pathway 1.2A
Community 1.2 to 1.1

Grazing that allows for adequate recovery between grazing events, and proper stocking rates, will shift the Decreased Midgrasses Plant Community back toward the Reference Plant Community. Natural disturbances such as return to normal precipitation will contribute to this shift.

State 2
Sod-bound State

This state is characterized by the Sod-bound Plant Community. An ecological threshold has been crossed and a significant amount of production and diversity has been lost when compared to the Reference State. Significant biotic and soil changes have negatively impacted energy flow and the nutrient and hydrologic cycles.

This is a very stable state, resistant to change due to the high tolerance of blue grama and/or buffalograss to grazing, the development of a shallow root system (or root pan), and subsequent changes in hydrology and nutrient cycling. The loss of other functional/structural groups such as cool-season bunch and rhizomatous grasses, forbs, and shrubs, reduces the biodiversity and productivity of this site.

Community 2.1
Sod-bound Shortgrass Plant Community– Blue Grama, Threadleaf Sedge

This plant community develops under long-term frequent and severe defoliation. This typically occurs when the community has been continuously grazed with heavy stocking rates, throughout the growing season over a period of many years. The midgrasses and palatable forbs have been eliminated. The dominant species are blue grama and threadleaf sedge. These species have developed into a sod-bound condition occurring in localized colonies exhibiting a mosaic appearance. Perennial threeawn species such as Fendler’s threeawn have increased. Forbs such as scarlet

globemallow, wild onion, death camas, and slimflower scurfpea remain. Forbs and shrubs that continue to increase are Cuman ragweed (western ragweed), hairy false goldenaster, prairie sagewort (fringed sagewort), and pricklypear. Plant diversity is low.

Energy flow, water cycle and mineral cycle have been negatively affected. Litter levels are very low and unevenly distributed.

In the 10 to 14“ PZ, the total annual production (air-dry weight) is about 600 pounds per acre during an average year, but it can range from about 400 pounds per acre in unfavorable years to about 800 pounds per acre in above-average years.

This plant community is extremely resistant to change. Many plant species are missing a seed source is not readily available.

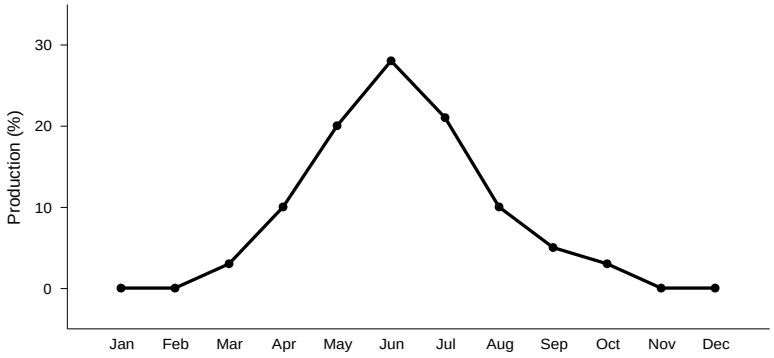

Figure 12. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). WY5803, Northern Rolling High Plains, Southern Part, cool-season/warm-season co-dominant. Cool-season/warm-season co-dominant.

State 3
Eroded State

The Eroded State develops with long-term excessive grazing or frequent and severe defoliation, without adequate recovery between grazing events, heavy, excessive grazing with overstocking.

An ecological threshold has been crossed. Soil erosion and loss of organic matter or carbon reserves are resource concerns.

Community 3.1
Increased Bare Ground Community– Annual Grasses and Forbs, Threeawn, Pricklypear, Invasives, and Bare Ground

This plant community occurs where the rangeland is grazed year-round, at high stock densities. Physical impact such as trampling, soil compaction, and trailing typically contribute to this transition. The plant composition is made of annuals with a few species of perennial forbs and grasses that are very tolerant to frequent and severe defoliation. Grasses include Fendler’s threeawn. Annuals such as sixweeks fescue, Russian thistle, and kochia have increased or invaded. The dominant forbs include hairy false goldenaster, curlycup gumweed, field cottonrose, and woolly plantain. Green sagewort, broom snakeweed, and pricklypear are increasing. Annual bromes such as field brome (also known as Japanese brome), and cheatgrass invade.

In the 10 to 14“ PZ, the total annual production (air-dry weight) is about 400 pounds per acre during an average year, but it can range from about 150 pounds per acre in unfavorable years to about 550 pounds per acre in above-average years. Annual production is highly variable and should be determined on-site.

Soil erosion hazard has increased due to the increase of bare ground. Runoff typically is high and infiltration is low. All ecological functions are impaired. Desertification is advanced.

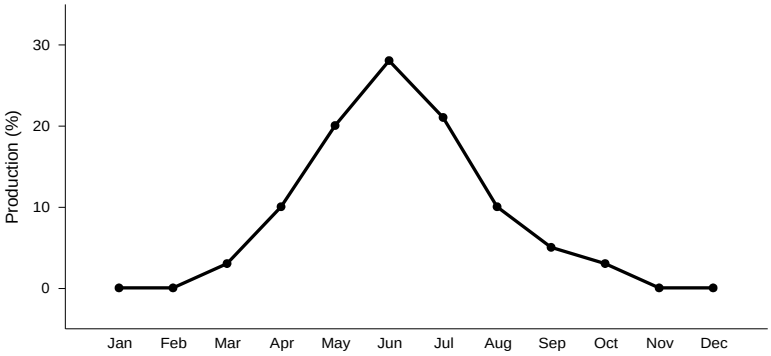

Figure 13. Plant community growth curve (percent production by month). WY5803, Northern Rolling High Plains, Southern Part, cool-season/warm-season co-dominant. Cool-season/warm-season co-dominant.

Transition T1A
State 1 to 2

Excessive grazing without adequate recovery between grazing events or frequent and severe defoliation, will shift this plant community across an ecological threshold toward the Sod-Bound State. Biotic integrity and hydrologic function will be impaired because of this transition.

Transition T2A
State 2 to 3

Long-term excessive grazing or frequent and severe defoliation without adequate recovery between grazing events, or heavy, excessive grazing with overstocking, will cause a shift across an ecological threshold to the Eroded State. Non-native annual bromes begin to invade in this transition.

Additional community tables

Table 6. Community 1.1 plant community composition

Group	Common Name	Symbol	Scientific Name	Annual Production (Lb/Acre)	Foliar Cover (%)
Grass/Grasslike					
1	**Cool-Season Rhizomatous**			135–270	
	western wheatgrass	PASM	*Pascopyrum smithii*	90–135	–
	thickspike wheatgrass	ELLA3	*Elymus lanceolatus*	90–135	–
2	**Cool-Season Midgrasses/Grass-likes**			230–275	
	bluebunch wheatgrass	PSSP6	*Pseudoroegneria spicata*	135–270	–
	needle and thread	HECO26	*Hesperostipa comata*	45–90	–
	threadleaf sedge	CAFI	*Carex filifolia*	45–90	–
3	**Warm-Season Bunch Midgrass**			45–90	
	little bluestem	SCSC	*Schizachyrium scoparium*	45–90	–
4	**Warm-Season Shortgrass**			45–90	
	blue grama	BOGR2	*Bouteloua gracilis*	45–90	–
5	**Miscellaneous**			18–90	
	Grass, perennial	2GP	*Grass, perennial*	9–45	–

	purple threeawn	ARPU9	*Aristida purpurea*	9–45	–
	prairie Junegrass	KOMA	*Koeleria macrantha*	9–45	–
	Sandberg bluegrass	POSE	*Poa secunda*	9–45	–
	green needlegrass	NAVI4	*Nassella viridula*	9–45	–
	Cusick's bluegrass	POCU3	*Poa cusickii*	9–45	–
	hairy grama	BOHI2	*Bouteloua hirsuta*	0–26	–
	plains muhly	MUCU3	*Muhlenbergia cuspidata*	9–18	–
Forb					
6	**Forbs**			90–135	
	desertparsley	LOMAT	*Lomatium*	9–45	–
	large Indian breadroot	PEES	*Pediomelum esculentum*	9–45	–
	American vetch	VIAM	*Vicia americana*	9–45	–
	western yarrow	ACMIO	*Achillea millefolium var. occidentalis*	9–45	–
	bluebells	MERTE	*Mertensia*	9–45	–
	milkvetch	ASTRA	*Astragalus*	9–45	–
	textile onion	ALTE	*Allium textile*	9–45	–
	spiny phlox	PHHO	*Phlox hoodii*	9–45	–
	tapertip hawksbeard	CRAC2	*Crepis acuminata*	9–45	–
	Forb, perennial	2FP	*Forb, perennial*	9–45	–
	stemless mock goldenweed	STAC	*Stenotus acaulis*	9–45	–
	prairie thermopsis	THRH	*Thermopsis rhombifolia*	9–45	–
	sulphur-flower buckwheat	ERUM	*Eriogonum umbellatum*	9–45	–
	purple prairie clover	DAPU5	*Dalea purpurea*	9–45	–
	white prairie clover	DACA7	*Dalea candida*	9–45	–
	dotted blazing star	LIPU	*Liatris punctata*	9–45	–
	upright prairie coneflower	RACO3	*Ratibida columnifera*	9–45	–
	aster	ASTER	*Aster*	9–45	–
	scarlet beeblossom	GACO5	*Gaura coccinea*	9–45	–
	rosy pussytoes	ANRO2	*Antennaria rosea*	9–45	–
Shrub/Vine					
7	**Shrubs**			45–135	
	Shrub (>.5m)	2SHRUB	*Shrub (>.5m)*	9–45	–
	big sagebrush	ARTR2	*Artemisia tridentata*	9–45	–
	Wyoming big sagebrush	ARTRW8	*Artemisia tridentata ssp. wyomingensis*	9–45	–
	prairie sagewort	ARFR4	*Artemisia frigida*	9–45	–
	rubber rabbitbrush	ERNA10	*Ericameria nauseosa*	9–45	–
	winterfat	KRLA2	*Krascheninnikovia lanata*	9–45	–
	skunkbush sumac	RHTR	*Rhus trilobata*	0–45	–
	plains pricklypear	OPPO	*Opuntia polyacantha*	9–18	–

Animal community

Animal Community – Wildlife Interpretations Wildlife Interpretations (from 2001 ESD; will be revised in future updates)

Historic Climax Plant Community: The predominance of grasses in this plant community favors grazers and mixed-feeders, such as bison, elk, and antelope. Suitable thermal and escape cover for deer may be limited due to the low quantities of woody plants. However, topographical variations could provide some escape cover. When found adjacent to sagebrush dominated states, this plant community may provide brood-rearing and foraging areas for sage grouse, as well as lek sites. Other birds that would frequent this plant community include western meadowlarks, horned larks, and golden eagles. Many grassland-obligate small mammals would occur here.

Heavy Sagebrush: This plant community can provide important winter foraging for elk, mule deer and antelope, as sagebrush can approach 15% protein and 40-60% digestibility during that time. This community can provide nesting and brood rearing habitat for sage grouse.

Mixed Sagebrush/Grass: The combination of an overstory of sagebrush and an understory of grasses and forbs provide a very diverse plant community for wildlife. The crowns of sagebrush tends to break up hard crusted snow on winter ranges, so mule deer and antelope may use this state for foraging and cover year-round, as would cottontail and jack rabbits. It provides important winter, nesting, brood-rearing, and foraging habitat for sage grouse. Brewer’s sparrows’ nest in big sagebrush plants and hosts of other nesting birds utilize stands in the 20-30% cover range.

Blue Grama Sod: These communities provide limited foraging for antelope and other grazers. They may be used as a foraging site by sage grouse if proximal to woody cover and if the Historic Climax Plant Community or the Mixed Sagebrush/Grass Plant Community is limiting. Generally, these are not target plant communities for wildlife habitat management.

Animal Community – Grazing Interpretations (updated in 2019 Provisional revision)

The following table is a guide to stocking rates for the plant communities described in the Shallow Loamy 10-14" PZ site. These are conservative estimates for initial planning. On-site conditions will vary, and stocking rates should be adjusted based on range inventories, animal kind and class, forage availability (adjusted for slope and distance to water), and the type of grazing system (number of pastures, planned moves, etc.), all of which is determined in the conservation planning process.

The following stocking rates are based on the total annual forage production in a normal year multiplied by 25% harvest efficiency of preferred and desirable forage species, divided by 912 pounds of ingested air-dry vegetation for an animal unit per month (Natl. Range and Pasture Handbook, 1997). An animal unit month is defined as the amount of forage required by one livestock animal, with or without one calf, for one month, and is shortened to AUM.

Plant Community (PC) Production (total lbs./acre in a normal year) and Stocking Rate (AUM/acre) are listed below:

Example: Reference PC – (900) (.25)

900 lbs. per acre X 25% Harvest Efficiency = 225 lbs. forage demand for one month. 225 lbs. per acre/912 demand per AUM =.25

Plant Community (PC) Production (lbs.ac), and Stocking Rate (AUM/Acre) are listed below:

10-14 Inch PZ:

Reference PC - (900) (0.25)

Increased Warm-Season PC – (700) (0.19)

Sod-Bound PC - (600) (0.16)

Increased Bare Ground PC (*) (*)

* Highly variable stocking rates must be determined on site.

Grazing by domestic livestock is one of the major income-producing industries in the area. Rangelands in this area provide year-long forage under prescribed grazing for cattle, sheep, horses and other herbivores. During the dormant period, livestock may need supplementation based on reliable forage analysis.

Hydrological functions

Water is the principal factor limiting forage production on this site. This site is dominated by soils in hydrologic group B and C, with localized areas in hydrologic group D. Infiltration ranges from moderate to moderately rapid. Runoff potential for this site varies from moderate to high depending on soil hydrologic group and ground cover. In many cases, areas with greater than 75% ground cover have the greatest potential for high infiltration and lower runoff. An example of an exception would be where short-grasses form a strong sod and dominate the site. Areas where ground cover is less than 50% have the greatest potential to have reduced infiltration and higher runoff (refer to Part 630, NRCS National Engineering Handbook for detailed hydrology information).

Rills and gullies should not typically be present. Water flow patterns should be barely distinguishable if at all present. Pedestals are only slightly present in association with bunchgrasses such as bluebunch wheatgrass. Litter typically falls in place, and signs of movement are not common. Chemical and physical crusts are rare to non-existent. Cryptogamic crusts are present, but only cover 1-2% of the soil surface.

Recreational uses

This site provides hunting opportunities for upland game species. The wide variety of plants which bloom from spring until fall have an esthetic value that appeals to visitors.

Wood products

No appreciable wood products are present on the site.

Other products

None noted.

Other information

Site Development & Testing Plan

General Data (MLRA and Revision Notes, Hierarchical Classification, Ecological Site Concept, Physiographic, Climate, and Water Features, and Soils Data):

Updated. All “Required” items complete to Provisional level

Community Phase Data (Ecological Dynamics, STM, Transition & Recovery Pathways, Reference Plant Community, Species Composition List, Annual Production Table):

Updated. All “Required” items complete to Provisional level.

Annual Production Table is from the “Previously Approved” ESD (2001).

The Annual Production Table and Species Composition List will be reviewed for future updates at the Approved level.

Each Alternative State/Community

Complete to Provisional level

Supporting Information (Site Interpretations, Assoc. & Similar Sites, Inventory Data References, Agency/State Correlation, References)

Updated. All “Required” items complete to Provisional level.

Wildlife Interpretations: Narrative is from “Previously Approved” ESD (2001). Wildlife species will need to be updated at the next Approved level.

Livestock Interpretations: Plant community names and stocking rates updated.

Hydrology, Recreational Uses, Wood Products, and Other Products carried over from previously “Approved” ESD (2001).

Existing NRI Inventory Data References updated. More field data collection is needed to support this site concept.

Reference Sheet
Rangeland Health Reference Sheet carried over from previously “Approved” ESD (2005).
It will be updated at the next “Approved” level.

“Future work, as described in a project plan, to validate the information in this provisional ecological site description is needed. This will include field activities to collect low and medium intensity sampling, soil correlations, and analysis of that data. Annual field reviews should be done by soil scientists and vegetation specialists. A final field review, peer review, quality control, and quality assurance reviews of the ESD will be needed to produce the final document.” (NI 430_306 ESI and ESD, April 2015)

Inventory data references

Information presented here have been derived from data collection on private and federal lands using:
• Double Sampling *
• Rangeland Health **
• Soil Stability **
• Line Point Intercept: Foliar canopy, basal cover (Forb, Graminoid, Shrub, Subshrub, Lichen, Moss, Rock fragments, Bare ground, Percentage of Litter) ***
• Soil pedon descriptions collected on site ****
* NRCS 528-Prescribed Grazing Standard job sheets.
** Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health, Version 4, 2005
*** Monitoring Manual for Grassland, Shrubland and Savanna Ecosystems, Volume II, 2005
**** Field Book for Describing and Sampling Soils, Version 3, 2012
NRI - Natural Resource Inventory data
SCS-RANGE-417 Production & Composition Record for Native Grazing Lands
Additional reconnaissance data collection using numerous ocular estimates and other inventory data; NRCS clipping data for USDA program support; field observations from experienced range-trained personnel.

Data Source: NRI
Number of Records: 57
Sample Period: 2005-2017
Counties: Campbell, Crook, Converse, Johnson, Natrona, Niobrara, Sheridan, Weston

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Data collection for this ecological site was done in conjunction with the progressive soil surveys within the 58B Northern Rolling High Plains (Southern Part), of Wyoming and Montana.

Note: Revisions to soil surveys are on-going. For the most recent updates, visit the Web Soil Survey, the official site for soils information: http://websoilsurvey.nrcs.usda.gov/app/WebSoilSurvey.aspx

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Acknowledgments

Project Staff:
Kimberly Diller, Ecological Site Inventory Specialist, NRCS MLRA SSO, Pueblo CO
Mike Leno, Project Leader, NRCS MLRA SSO, Buffalo, WY

Partners/Contributors:
Joe Dyer, Soil Scientist, NRCS MLRA SSO, Buffalo, WY

Arnie Irwin, Soil Scientist, BLM, Buffalo, WY
Blaine Horn, Rangeland Extension Educator, UW Extension, Buffalo, WY
Isabelle Giuliani, Resource Soil Scientist, NRCS, Douglas, WY
Mary Jo Kimble, Project Leader, NRCS MLRA SSO, Miles City, MT
Ryan Murray, Rangeland Management Specialist, NRCS, Buffalo, WY
Lauren Porensky, Ph.D., Ecologist, ARS, Fort Collins, CO
Chadley Prosser, Rangeland Program Manager, USFS, Bismarck, ND
Bryan Christensen, Ecological Site Inventory Specialist, NRCS-MLRA SSO, Pinedale, WY
Marji Patz, Ecological Site Inventory Specialist, NRCS-MLRA SSO, Powell, WY
Rick Peterson, Ecological Site Inventory Specialist, NRCS-MLRA SSO, Rapid City, SD

Program Support:
John Hartung, WY State Rangeland Management Specialist-QC, NRCS, Casper, WY
David Kraft, NRCS MLRA Ecological Site Inventory Specialist-QA, Emporia, KS
Carla Green Adams, Editor, NRCS-SSR5, Denver, CO
Chad Remley, Regional Director, Northern Great Plains Soil Survey, Salina, KS
Those involved in developing the 2001 version: Everett Bainter, WY State Rangeland Management Specialist, WY-NRCS, and Glen Mitchell, Rangeland Management Specialist, WY-NRCS

Non-discrimination statement
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Rangeland health reference sheet

Interpreting Indicators of Rangeland Health is a qualitative assessment protocol used to determine ecosystem condition based on benchmark characteristics described in the Reference Sheet. A suite of 17 (or more) indicators are typically considered in an assessment. The ecological site(s) representative of an assessment location must be known prior to applying the protocol and must be verified based on soils and climate. Current plant community cannot be used to identify the ecological site.

Author(s)/participant(s)	
Contact for lead author	
Date	04/01/2005
Approved by	E. Bainter

Approval date	
Composition (Indicators 10 and 12) based on	Annual Production

Indicators

1. **Number and extent of rills:** Rills should not be present.

2. **Presence of water flow patterns:** Barely observable.

3. **Number and height of erosional pedestals or terracettes:** Essentially non-existent.

4. **Bare ground from Ecological Site Description or other studies (rock, litter, lichen, moss, plant canopy are not bare ground):** Bare ground is 40-60% occurring in small areas throughout site.

5. **Number of gullies and erosion associated with gullies:** Active gullies should be restricted to areas of concentrated water flow
patterns on steeper slopes.

6. **Extent of wind scoured, blowouts and/or depositional areas:** Small scoured sites may be observed.

7. **Amount of litter movement (describe size and distance expected to travel):** Litter movement is little to none based on topography and water flow patterns.

8. **Soil surface (top few mm) resistance to erosion (stability values are averages - most sites will show a range of values):** Plant cover and litter is at 50% or greater of soil surface and maintains soil surface
integrity. Soil Stability class is anticipated to be 4 or greater.

9. **Soil surface structure and SOM content (include type of structure and A-horizon color and thickness):** Use Soil Series description for depth and color of A-horizon.

10. **Effect of community phase composition (relative proportion of different functional groups) and spatial distribution on infiltration and runoff:** Grass canopy and basal cover should reduce raindrop impact and slow overland flow providing increased time for infiltration to occur. Infiltration is moderate.

11. **Presence and thickness of compaction layer (usually none; describe soil profile features which may be mistaken for compaction on this site):** No compaction layer or soil surface crusting should be present.

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12. **Functional/Structural Groups (list in order of descending dominance by above-ground annual-production or live foliar cover using symbols: >>, >, = to indicate much greater than, greater than, and equal to):**

    Dominant: Mid stature Cool Season Grasses > Short Grasses/Grasslikes Mid Stature Warm Season Grasses Shrubs Forbs

    Sub-dominant:

    Other:

    Additional:

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13. **Amount of plant mortality and decadence (include which functional groups are expected to show mortality or decadence):** Very Low

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14. **Average percent litter cover (%) and depth (in):** Average litter cover is 15-25% with depths of 0.25 to 0.5 inches

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15. **Expected annual annual-production (this is TOTAL above-ground annual-production, not just forage annual-production):** 900 lbs./ac

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16. **Potential invasive (including noxious) species (native and non-native). List species which BOTH characterize degraded states and have the potential to become a dominant or co-dominant species on the ecological site if their future establishment and growth is not actively controlled by management interventions. Species that become dominant for only one to several years (e.g., short-term response to drought or wildfire) are not invasive plants. Note that unlike other indicators, we are describing what is NOT expected in the reference state for the ecological site:** Blue grama, Threadleaf sedge, Prickly Pear, Broom Snakeweed, and Species found on Noxious Weed List.

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17. **Perennial plant reproductive capability:** All species are capable of reproducing.
